

Press Release



Belarus destroys over three million hazardous landmines fulfilling its Ottawa Convention obligations; over 50 million landmines have now been destroyed

Belarus achieves this milestone with support of the European Union under the strictest European environmental standards

Geneva, 7 April 2017 — Belarus has announced that it has destroyed 3.4 million ‘PFM-1’ anti-personnel mines, with the last 78 destroyed during a symbolic ceremony at a military base near the city of Rechitsa in the Gomel region. With Belarus' announcement, there are now 159 States Parties to the Convention, also known as the Ottawa Convention, that no longer have stockpile destruction obligations under the treaty.

Belarus, which acceded to the Convention on 3 September 2003, said that thanks to support provided by the European Union it was able to meet its obligation. Belarus faced a particular challenge due to the sizable stock and type of landmines it had to destroy. Soviet-era ‘PFM-1’ mines are extremely hazardous and pose serious technical difficulties. “To dispose of them safely, the Republic of Belarus appealed to the international community to provide technical and financial assistance,” said Belarus.

“In 2011, the European Union signed a contract for 3.9 million euros with Spanish Explosivos Alaveses, Expal, to create a mobile plant with a cold detonation chamber,” to destroy the large and hazardous stockpile. The Centre for the Disposal of Anti-Personnel Mines inaugurated in May 2014 in Belarus, carried out the destruction by charges in a thick-walled armoured kiln. “The technology, developed specifically for the destruction of ammunition through liquid explosives, allowed to safely dispose chemical components and remaining waste,” indicated Belarus referring to the environmentally friendly process which met the highest “Belarusian and European environmental standards”.

Major-General Oleg Voinov, Assistant Secretary and Head of the Department of International Military Cooperation of the Ministry of Defense, Andrea Wiktorin, Head of Delegation of the European Union in Belarus, and Colonel Andrey Petrovich Kurakov led the ‘last detonation’. Heads of missions of the European Union Member States, representatives of the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and retired Spanish Admiral Francisco Torrente of Expal, also attended the ceremony.

H.E. Thomas Hajnoczi, Ambassador of Austria to the UN in Geneva and President of the Convention congratulated Belarus for “achieving the full implementation of its obligations under the Convention” saying: “as a result of Belarus’ commitment and European Union support, the world has taken one further step towards eliminating these insidious weapons. We look forward to Belarus' formal statement this coming June in Geneva.”

The Convention [was adopted and signed 20 years ago](#) and entered into force in 1999. It is the prime humanitarian and disarmament treaty aimed at ending the suffering caused by landmines by prohibiting their use, stockpiling, production and transfer, by ensuring their destruction, and assisting the victims. With Belarus completing their destruction, the States Parties have collectively destroyed over 50 million landmines.